



The following was a press release issued Oct. 14, 1999. Updates have been made to include recent county additions to the Fire Ant Quarantine August 8, 2000.

IMPORTED FIRE ANTS PROMPT ADVISORY TO HAY PRODUCERS

NASHVILLE -- Reports from other states of hay shipments infested with imported fire ants has prompted the Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA) to issue an advisory to Tennessee hay producers.

"The important thing is that Tennessee farmers need to get a permit from our department if they're located in a fire ant regulated area and are shipping hay or straw to non-regulated areas within the state or to other states," said TDA Plant Certification Administrator Gray Haun. "And, if farmers buy hay from an area that has fire ants, they should look for a permit for their own protection."

State and federal regulations regarding the shipment of plant materials require that a permit accompany hay or straw shipments from fire ant regulated areas or states. The permit serves as verification that the hay or straw has been inspected immediately prior to shipment and found to be apparently free of fire ants. Hay that has been stored on the ground cannot be moved into non-regulated areas. In general, all states south of Tennessee are known to have fire ants and are considered regulated areas.

In Tennessee, regulated areas include all or portions of the following counties: Bradley, Chester, Decatur, Fayette, Franklin, Giles, Hamilton, Hardeman, Hardin, Haywood, Henderson, Lewis, Lawrence, Lincoln, Madison, Marion, Marshall, Maury, McMinn, McNairy, Meigs, Monroe, Moore, Perry, Polk, Rhea, Sequatchie, Shelby and Wayne.

"Because of the widespread drought this year, there's a lot of demand for hay and more is being transported across county lines and interstate. This creates a greater potential for the spread of quarantined insects," added Haun.

"We want to ensure the continued shipment of hay and other products in a way that won't jeopardize markets or create problems for Tennessee farmers."

For more information about fire ant regulated areas, or farmers needing a permit to ship hay or straw can call the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Plant Certification office at (615) 837-5130. Farmers who suspect that they have received hay containing fire ants should also call this number.